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ABSTRACT

The paper describes facets of the teacher education program at Alverno College (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) that facilitate teacher empowerment, especially the use of multicultural education to empower urban educators. It discusses aspects of urban teacher development, describes the teaching/learning and assessment processes that develop teachers, and shares the program design. The program begins with a human relations workshop. Concepts and issues from the workshop carry over to the curriculum. An invitational framework discusses topics like planning, lesson design, classroom management, teacher expectations, motivation, and student assessment. Prospective teachers test their understanding in field experience placements. Midway through the field experience (prior to student teaching), students discuss their own development with faculty. The final field experience pulls together the multicultural education, with two 9-week student teaching placements in multicultural schools. A philosophy of education course comes after student teaching, so students can create philosophies based on experience. Most students in the program start out frustrated, facing their own attitudes, and seeing the world as much larger than they realized. Ongoing self-reflection and faculty guidance results in growing adaptability and self-confidence. Students evidence broadened frames of reference and a growing commitment to developing urban learners. Faculty members also change in the process. As they talk to one another about the program, they collaboratively design courses and assessments that will prepare students to take ownership of the role of teacher as one who can make a difference. The paper includes 41 endnotes. (SM)

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EMPOWERMENT FOR TEACHERS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS: INVITING THE TEACHING-LEARNING EXCHANGE

by

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EMPOWERMENT FOR TEACHERS IN MULTICULTURAL SCHOOLS: INVITING THE TEACHING-LEARNING EXCHANGE

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The purpose of our presentation is to describe facets of the teacher education program at Alverno College that we believe contribute to teacher empowerment, focusing specifically on the use of multicultural education as an empowerment tool for urban educators. We will lay out some aspects of the development of urban teachers, describe the teaching/learning and assessment processes that develop teachers, and share our particular design for such a program.

Development of Urban Teachers

The realities of urban teaching require that the preparation of those teachers include explicit attention to several areas: 1) the diversity of learners and how factors such as race, culture, gender, social class, family and demographics affect learning; 2) learning styles and types of intelligence; 3) values and learning; 4) motivation and discipline; and 5) self-concept and achievement. Information about these areas needs to be integrated with content, methodology and experiences in a manner that allows pre-service teachers to develop appropriate dispositions toward urban children and their needs. Further, knowledge and dispositions need to translate into beneficial actions in the classroom - actions that lead to academic success and positive self-concepts for students and feelings of efficacy for teachers.

Processes That Develop Teachers

The teaching/learning and assessment modes necessary for urban education integrate the importance of knowing and doing, recognizing that "real learning comes in the doing." This is a break with past practice. Traditionally, education students learned about teaching by hearing and reading about it, having a very limited and late exposure to the actual learning environment and students. They were tested primarily in the area of recall of information, with little or no focus on their attitudes or dispositions. Judgments about actions tended to be disproportionately weighted towards content and efficiency, giving scarce attention to affect and interaction.

As education becomes more student-centered, teacher education must require more active learning, more involvement with the application of information in the classroom. Providing opportunities to practice can allow the teachers-to-be to test their assumptions or the theories they are studying, sparking questions and solidifying understanding. Equally important are opportunities to reflect on practice, trying out different perspectives or frames for ideas. Pre-service teachers need to be able to reflect on both what they know and what they do; to consciously expand their frame of reference to include the perspectives of their students; to interact respectfully and optimistically with students whose cultures are substantially different from their own; to question their own values, ideas and assumptions to explode myths and stereotypes; and to put into practice the theory and research supporting effective educational practice.

Such an integrated approach to knowledge, dispositions, and actions requires a different kind of measurement of progress. The word "testing" conjures up images of

true/false and "fill in the blank" questions focused on passive learning. The faculty at Alverno (1985) has chosen to use the term "assessment," drawing on its root meaning ("to sit down beside") to convey the importance of doing something "with" rather than "to" someone. Like many of our colleagues across the country, we are trying to develop measures that integrate knowing and doing, that tap our students' development of action and disposition, as well as knowledge. These measures include observations of students' interaction at the school site, simulations of activities of teachers, analytical discussions of case studies, and reflective writing.

Alverno's Design for Teacher Preparation

Figure 1 is an outline of courses and experiences in the teacher education programs at Alverno College. A number of "threads" can be followed through the program; we will focus on those that most clearly address the needs of the urban teacher.

The program starts with ED 116, "Human Relations Workshop," taken in the student's second semester. It is their first opportunity to do reflecting and framing around educational and cultural issues. The eight-week course represents the foundation upon which we build the multicultural focus within the program. Students hear presentations and discuss such concepts as frame of reference, high and low context cultures, language, family, and significant values, with a special emphasis on the experience of minority cultures in relationship to those concepts. One of the benefits of the course is that we are able to start a dialogue with students on sensitive issues and get them to respond honestly. In weekly journal writing, students are asked to summarize the ideas they have heard and then to reflect their own, personal response. In these writings, read and responded to by a faculty member, students may reveal sophistication or naivete, openness or hostility; whatever each student's "starting point" in terms of dispositions we gain a valuable insight into her readiness to interact effectively with urban students.

The concepts and issues introduced in ED 116 are carried through the curriculum, so that students have the opportunity to move from their initial positions, if appropriate, and to deepen their understanding and awareness of these concepts and issues. The two "principles of teaching" or general methods courses, focused on elementary or secondary education, incorporate a self-concept approach to teaching and learning. Developed by Purkey and Novak (1984) in Inviting School Success, this framework allows students to investigate "inviting" and "disinviting" behaviors and comments from both personal and professional standpoints. Through examining the inviting process, the levels of functioning involved, and the types of relationships that teachers develop with their students, the courses lead them to choose a stance of optimism and respect over one of pessimism and contempt.

The invitational framework is applied in the presentation and discussion of topics like planning, lesson design, classroom management, motivation, teacher expectations, and assessment of student learning. Faculty discuss their own teaching processes with students, to make the application of the framework explicit. At the same time, the teachers-to-be have the opportunity to test out their understanding in their own interaction with students in their first field experience placement, which is concurrent with these courses. In their two to three hours a week on-site, they work with small groups of learners. They complete weekly journal entries that call upon them to reflect on their experiences.

Another framework that promotes the development of broadened frames of reference is introduced to students in PCM 108, "Practical Applications of Language Analysis." In this foundation course for the reading/language arts requirement, students

develop an awareness of the symbolic process and the arbitrary nature of language. They explore the ways in which language can be used to clarify or distort meanings, to inspire to action, and to manipulate feelings. They study dialects and come to understand the difference between talking about "correct English" and "standard English." They become conscious of the need for generalization and the danger of stereotyping. This course also includes a specific focus on the development of critical thinking and the building of strategies for future elementary and secondary teachers to integrate thinking across the curriculum.

In the four semesters in which students are involved in field experiences prior to student teaching, they also take the course work in subject matter areas and the specific methods courses required in their programs. Each of their field experiences has a particular focus, while also increasing the expectations of the responsibility that the student will assume at her site. By the third and fourth field, for example, faculty expect the students to take responsibility for whole class lessons at least two or three times in the semester. In each of the fieldwork semesters, students are asked to reflect on all of their courses to make relationships between what they are studying and the elements of human relations and multicultural education first introduced in ED 116.

Midway through the fieldwork sequence, faculty conduct an interview with each education student. Lasting about an hour, this one-on-one interaction gives the student a chance to talk about her development, through the use of structured, open-ended questions. The faculty use the interview as an opportunity to get to know students in a more personal way, but it is also a useful screening device. For example, if a student indicates in the interview a lack of understanding of developmental psychology leading to seriously inappropriate expectations of children, the faculty would provide remediation or suggest career counseling. Similarly, indications of serious discomfort in dealing with minority students or special education students would be a red flag for the faculty.

The final field experience pulls together a number of aspects of multicultural education. Because Milwaukee is blessed with a diverse population, each student can be placed in a multicultural school setting and have the opportunity to draw together in that setting her understanding of frameworks related to teaching and learning. Students' reflection is guided to assist them to address the particular needs of the multicultural setting.

In all of the fields, faculty visit students at their placements and observe their interaction with students. A criteria checklist identifies the areas that students must demonstrate; faculty look at student behavior for evidence of appropriate action and make inferences about knowledge and dispositions on the basis of those actions.

Students have two nine-week placements in their full semester of student teaching. Elementary students have a primary and an intermediate placement, while secondary have a middle and a high school placement. Faculty supervisors and cooperating teachers in the schools use carefully crafted criteria to guide teachers-to-be in the integration of their knowing and doing in the school setting.

The capstone course for the education student is ED 412, "Philosophy of Education." Instead of having a foundations course at the beginning of their programs, we've placed this course after student teaching, as a way to provide significant reflection on the experience. Here students formulate their personal philosophy of education, after being exposed to the students, environment, and the realities of teaching in an urban setting today.

The first eight weeks of the course deals with children at risk, pointing out that most children in public school today are at risk for one reason or another. The statistics are overwhelming, even depressing, but we add the positive message, so wonderfully portrayed in the NBC special "A+ for Kids," that teachers can make a difference if they believe they can and choose to do so. Many people from our community echo this message as they share how they are reaching the at risk population in their various fields. In addition to writing a paper on their philosophy of education, students are asked to design programs to address a particular segment of the at risk population. They do site visits and collect data to prepare and present these projects to the class. It is amazing to see how much of what they learned during different phases of their teacher education program gets incorporated into these projects.

Through the four or more years of the process of the program, the faculty's experience is that many students start out being frustrated, facing their own attitudes perhaps for the first time, seeing the world as much larger than they realized. However, they evidence a growing self-confidence and an ability to adapt as they move through the program, a result of both their own ongoing self-reflection and the faculty's guidance and feedback. We watch them broaden their frames of reference and begin to accept, not just tolerate, other perspectives. Finally, we see in them a growing commitment to the development of learners and, specifically, to the needs of the urban child.

We as faculty also find ourselves being changed in the process. As we continue to talk to each other about the students, the program and its materials, ideas, and problems, we collaboratively design and redesign the types of courses and assessments that we hope will prepare our students to take ownership of the role of teacher as <u>one who can make a difference</u>.

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Figure 1: Model of the development of multicultural components of the Alverno College teacher education program

1st semester General education requirements

2nd semester ED 116 Human Relations Workshop
General education requirements

3rd semester ED 221 Principles of Instruction
ED 356
ED 210 lst field experience
Content area course work

4th semester PCM 108 Language/Critical Thinking
ED 215 2nd field experience
Content area course work

5th semester ED 310 3rd field experience
Methods courses
Content area course work

6th semester ED 315 4th field experience
Methods courses
Content area course work

7th semester Student teaching

8th semester ED 412 Philosophy of Education
Content area course work